

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: June 9, 2016

Agenda Item: 2016 Mule Deer Quotas Outside the Biennial Quota Ranges

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Min

Background

The Commission previously adopted the quota range for deer and elk B licenses for each hunting district where FWP can make changes that do not need Commission approval. However, changes outside the adopted ranges do need Commission approval. There are no proposed changes to elk quotas. Deer: In Region 7, FWP proposes a region-wide mule deer B-license (007-03) quota and quota range as below. No other changes are proposed.

- Increase the mule deer B-license (007-03) quota from 4,500 to 7,500.
- Restore the pre-existing (pre-2010) Region 7 antlerless mule deer B license quota range, changing the current upper quota range from 5,500 to 11,000.

Antlerless harvest is a very important component of mule deer management. In Region 7's highly variable prairie-breaks environment proactive prescriptive management, which the region adopted in 1982, has significantly dampened the wide population fluctuations seen when management was reactive and variable prior to 1982. Also, since 1982 landowner complaints about mule deer game damage have been declining steadily and significantly, and buck:doe ratios have increased.

Mule deer populations in the Region have recovered remarkably since a recent low in 2012. Deer seen on the Region's 14 trend areas in 2016 are 47% above long-term average and fawn recruitment has been very strong for the last 3 years. Deer numbers are now higher than they were during years when nearly 11,000 B licenses were sold. Now is the time to apply additional antlerless harvest to avoid the unsustainable high numbers and wide population fluctuations of the past. AHM has not been followed since 2014 when B licenses were eliminated, and this proposal would return the flexibility needed to manage to AHM guidelines. More information is provided in the season justification in the commission packet. FWP biologists have proposed this change in a continuing effort to manage deer populations to objective, dampen wide population fluctuations, offer opportunity where biologically sustainable, and minimize conflicts on private land.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Sportsmen and landowners have expressed they are satisfied with the return to regionwide antlerless tags because of the flexibility they offer, and conversations across the region indicate awareness of increasing mule deer numbers. Landowners generally prefer the flexibility to adjust doe harvest on their land as they see fit. Formal public comment will run through 5 p.m., Friday, June 24th. Any final adoption will take place at the July 14 Commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis

No alternatives were considered.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends that the Commission approve for public comment the proposed changes to the Region 7 007-03 mule deer B-license quota and quota range.

Proposed Motion

I move that the Commission approve for public comment the Region 7 007-03 mule deer B-license increase from 4,500 to 7,500 and increase the upper quota range from 5,500 to 11,000 as recommended by FWP.